



# U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

## *Backlog Elimination Plan*

Update: June 16, 2004



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

# ❧ *Prepared for the United States Congress* ❧

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## Message from the Director

Two years ago the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) laid out a comprehensive Backlog Elimination Plan focused on achieving a six-month national average cycle time goal for all applications. The Backlog Elimination Plan was to represent the foundation of a renewed Backlog Elimination effort; however, soon after its release this nation's immigration professionals were faced with the effects of September 11, 2001, an event that would significantly challenge their ability to realize this goal.

This update to the original Backlog Elimination Plan affirms the newly formed U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) commitment to eliminating the backlog. This commitment is not just one of words, but one of action. Since my appointment and confirmation as Director of USCIS, I have worked closely with the leaders in USCIS to immediately review our processes, identify opportunities for streamlining and further improvement, and begin to implement meaningful change.

USCIS will increase its focus on information technology to ensure that long-term Backlog Reduction is sustained, customer service is improved, new fee for service business models are enabled, and a technology environment is deployed to support new processes and workflow aligned with the DHS mission and Presidential mandate for eGov standards.

These improvement efforts have started USCIS in the right direction and have begun to deliver upon their potential, but there is much more to be done. Just as the backlog was created over time, we must recognize that there is no quick fix to all our challenges – only through our commitment will we be able to claim success.

Thankfully we have the opportunity, the leadership, and the talent to make an impact. By the end of 2006, we will eliminate the application backlog and achieve six-month cycle times, and in doing so will deliver on the President's vision of "welcoming immigrants with open arms... not endless lines."

Eduardo Aguirre



Director  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services



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## Executive Summary

Throughout the past decade, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) committed itself to reducing the backlog while simultaneously improving processing integrity. In support of this commitment, INS developed an aggressive five-year strategy for eliminating the backlog and achieving a six-month or less cycle time for all applications. This strategy, outlined in the original Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Backlog Elimination Plan (March 2002) consisted of three key objectives: achieve a high-level of performance, transform business practices, and ensure integrity.

The Backlog Elimination Plan was intended to serve as the foundation for a renewed backlog elimination effort; however, the events of September 11, 2001 and the resulting focus on national security posed additional challenges to achieving a six-month cycle time standard for all applications.

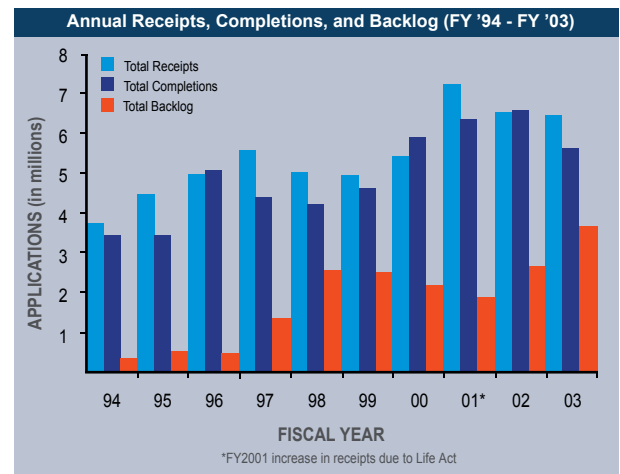
Nevertheless, the U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will meet its goals to eliminate the backlog by the end of 2006. In order to accomplish this, USCIS has updated the original Backlog Elimination Plan, which is intended to:

- Report on the current size of the application backlog;
- Identify the next steps to eliminate the backlog and achieve a six-month or less cycle time target for all forms by the end of 2006;
- Establish annual production goals; and
- Provide a plan to measure progress through quarterly reports and on-line information available on each district office and service center.

Analysis shows an application backlog that is both serious and until very recently, growing. USCIS calculates the current backlog to be approximately 3.4 million cases as of the end of 2003. The inclusion of Asylum Division cases raises the backlog to about 3.7 million cases out of a total pending of about 6.1 million cases. Given current estimates of backlog, USCIS must streamline and reengineer its business to achieve a 19.6% increase in productivity to achieve its cycle time goals and eliminate the backlog by the end of 2006. The Asylum Division, which is measured separately, will need to realize a 3.4% increase in efficiency to attain the same result.

USCIS has redefined the way in which backlog is calculated by basing the figure on receipts rather than completions. This definition of backlog better reflects the idea that as long as USCIS is processing its receipts within the designated target cycle time, there is no backlog for those applications as the pending count only reflects cases within target cycle time.

The figure below shows annual receipts, completions, and the backlogs from 1994 - 2003.



In order to increase productivity, USCIS will:

- Reengineer processes and automate manual workflow processes to achieve greater efficiencies;
- Update policies and procedures to streamline adjudications and increase the percentage of cases completed at initial review by an adjudicator;
- Manage production against milestones – beginning with collaboratively setting goals, reporting progress, and identifying additional improvement opportunities; and
- Work with the Office of the Ombudsman on pilot projects to test alternative processing approaches and new applications of proven off-the-shelf technology.

Again, by the end of 2006, USCIS will successfully meet the President's stated objective to eliminate the application backlog and achieve a cycle time of six-months or less while continuing to meet its national security responsibilities. As a part of this effort during the months ahead, USCIS will also place a renewed emphasis on customer service. Our customers are the center of our business and we must dramatically improve this relationship. In addition, USCIS is also developing ways to enhance anti-fraud efforts to ensure that it provides the right benefit to the right person in the right amount of time.

## Background

# Our Commitment

USCIS is committed to building and maintaining an organization that provides immigration information and benefits in a timely, accurate, consistent, courteous, and professional manner. It is this fundamental mission that guides USCIS as it faces the challenges of a new era.

This commitment is not one of words, but of action. Throughout the past decade the INS has initiated several efforts aimed at reducing the application backlog while simultaneously improving processing integrity. USCIS has enhanced these initiatives. Efforts such as the creation of the Performance Management Division (PMD), the implementation of Naturalization Quality Procedures (NQP), the opening of more than 120 Application Support Centers (ASCs), electronic filing of certain applications, and the process of criminal background checks have contributed to USCIS' focus on either reducing the application backlog or improving processing integrity.

To demonstrate support for this commitment, the INS developed an aggressive initial five-year strategy to eliminate the backlog. The original Backlog Elimination Plan challenged the INS to reach a national average cycle time of six-months or less for all applications by the end of 2003. The remaining years, 2004 - 2006, would then be used to further reduce cycle time targets for selected applications and to improve information technology and business processes to prevent backlogs from reoccurring.

As part of the original Backlog Elimination Plan, INS focused on three objectives:

- 1 Achieve a high-level of performance by establishing clear, concrete milestones and actively monitoring progress towards these milestones;**
- 2 Transform business practices by implementing significant information technology improvements and identifying processing improvements to transform the current way of doing business; and**
- 3 Ensure integrity by instituting comprehensive quality assurance measures.**

Guided by these objectives, and with the support of the Administration, INS was prepared to eliminate the existing application backlog. However, unforeseen events and resulting challenges changed INS' focus and ability to eliminate the backlog. Despite those events, USCIS has continued to be guided by the three overarching objectives mentioned above: achieve a high-level of performance, transform business practices, and ensure integrity.

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The 2002 Backlog Elimination Plan challenged INS to reach a national average cycle time of six months or less for all applications.

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Background

New Challenges

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 not only changed the nation, but also increased Immigration Services’ role in enhancing national security.

After 9/11, USCIS temporarily assumed a couple of new national security responsibilities that have since shifted to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bureau within DHS. The table to the right identifies these additional responsibilities.

These responsibilities had one-time effects on USCIS production that have since been regained (e.g., NSEERS registration). After 9/11, USCIS also implemented additional name-based security checks to include all applications and were valid for only 35 days to enhance national security. Applications not adjudicated within the time frame were required to have new security checks completed. This permanent change to business processes also affected USCIS production.

USCIS used resources to support national security activities - including NSEERS registration and implementation of the SEVIS program.

Post September 11, 2001 Responsibilities and Status	
Responsibilities	Status
<b>NSEERS (National Security Entry Exit Registration System):</b> Required the registration and fingerprinting of nationals already living in the U.S. from countries identified as potential threats.	Transferred to ICE. All individuals living in the U.S. prior to NSEERS implementation have registered. Re-registration requirement for individuals already in the U.S. has been suspended.
<b>SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System):</b> Replacement of the student immigrant tracking system included re-certification of schools and increased oversight of the program.	Program administration has been transferred to ICE.

Updating the Plan

Soon after a successful transition to DHS and the establishment of USCIS on March 1, 2003, USCIS leadership, led by Director Aguirre, gathered to examine the USCIS business processing and identify opportunities for transforming processing while improving customer service and continuing to enhance national security. As a result, we have updated the original Backlog Elimination Plan that is intended to:

- Report on the current size of the application backlog;
- Identify the next steps to eliminate the backlog and achieve a six-month or less cycle time target for all forms by the end of 2006;
- Establish annual production goals; and
- Provide a plan to measure progress through quarterly reports and on-line information available on each district office and service center.

The transition to DHS clarified the mission of USCIS and brought all of its individual benefits sections together to form one cohesive organization. For that reason, it is appropriate that this update to the Backlog Elimination Plan include a discussion and plan for elimination of all USCIS backlogs, including those in the Asylum Division that have not previously been included in the plan.

This updated Backlog Elimination Plan also meets the requirement specified in Section 459(a) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-296) which calls for a plan to be submitted to Congress detailing how USCIS will complete “efficiently, fairly, and within a reasonable time” the adjudication of non-immigrant, immigrant, naturalization, and Asylum/Refugee applications and petitions.

## Understanding the Backlog

# Backlog vs. Pending

Pending cases are defined as cases that have been received, but not yet adjudicated. Pending cases that are older than their target cycle time are considered to be backlog.

The initial Backlog Elimination Plan defined backlog as a function of time, and was based on a measure of completions. In other words, if an application type had a processing time (a measure of cycle time based on completion figures) of twelve months and a target processing time of three months, the backlog would be defined as nine months. (**Backlog = (Current Month Pending/Average Last 12 Months' Completions) – Processing time targets**). This definition did not accurately quantify the number of applications that were considered to be a part of the backlog.

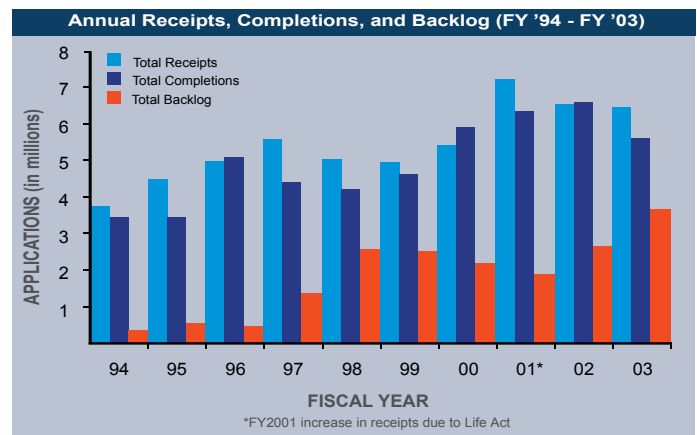
The new definition, in this Updated Plan, quantifies the backlog by basing the figure on the number of receipts during the previous number of months that corresponds with target cycle time (usually six) and the current pending count for a given application type. This calculated amount can then be used to assess and determine concrete production targets for backlogged application types and the resources necessary to meet those targets. Therefore, backlog is defined as the difference between pending and receipts for the number of months of target cycle time. (**Backlog = Pending – Last Six Months' receipts**).

This new definition of backlog better reflects the idea that as long as USCIS is processing its receipts within the designated target cycle time, there is no backlog for those applications as the pending count only reflects cases within our target cycle time.

This understanding of the differences between backlog and pending allows USCIS to estimate the size of the backlog. USCIS calculates the current backlog to be approximately 3.4 million cases as of the end of 2003. The inclusion of Asylum Division cases raises the backlog to about 3.7 million cases out of a total pending of about 6.1 million cases.

The figure in the upper right shows annual receipts, completions and the backlogs from 1994 - 2003. After leveling off in 1998 and decreasing between 1999 and 2001, the backlog has been increasing steadily since 2001.

As a result of the 1995 Asylum reforms, which established new strict timelines for Asylum Division adjudication, removed incentives for fraud and abuse of the system, and streamlined the Asylum process, Asylum Division applications are adjudicated in a regulatory context that is different from those governing other benefit applications in USCIS. Consequently, unlike in other USCIS workloads, priority must be placed on timely completion of new incoming Asylum Division applications over those applications filed prior to the reforms. The Asylum Division has worked cooperatively with the Depart-



The term **backlog** has often been used interchangeable with the term **pending**. This led to an overstated, and often confusing understanding of the backlog.

The backlog is only that portion of the pending volume that is older than the target cycle time for the application (currently set at six months for most applications).

ment of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) to ensure that post-reform affirmative Asylum applications are completed in a timely manner. In order to meet this goal, the Asylum Division manages its resources such that at least 75% of the cases referred to the EOIR were filed less than sixty days prior to referral.

Since the 1995 reforms, the Asylum Division has been successful in keeping current with new Asylum receipts on a consistent basis, completing the vast majority of new Asylum applications within 60 days of receipt. By the end of 2003, most of the program's 262,118 pending Asylum applications consisted of old applications that have been pending since before the reforms were implemented. Moreover, the Asylum Division's productivity has increased 60% since 1999, enabling the program not only to keep pace with new receipts, but also to significantly reduce its pending caseload each year. The Asylum Division has decreased its pending caseload from 464,121 cases in 1995 to 262,118 at the end of 2003 – a 44% reduction. The Asylum Division projects that it will nearly complete its pending caseload by the end of 2006, in conformance with the timeline of the overall USCIS backlog elimination plan.

## Understanding the Backlog

The following table indicates the percentage of a given application type's Pending count that is comprised of backlog cases (those cases that are above the cycle time goal). As indicated in the table, almost all application types have a backlog and the percentage of Pending that these backlog cases represent varies significantly from 20% to 83% with the Service-wide backlog comprising 61% of the Pending count. The higher the calculated percentage, the higher the number of backlog cases within a given form type's pending count, which serves as an indicator of problematic areas that management needs to target.

USCIS will ensure that all customers are provided an opportunity to receive a decision within six months or less. However, USCIS recognizes that even after the backlog is eliminated some cases may take longer than the target cycle time due to case specific issues. For example, USCIS has information that the applicant may be a threat to national security, danger to public safety, or participating in fraudulent activities; or USCIS is unable to determine statutory eligibility for a benefit because an applicant fails to act promptly to further the application process (e.g., submission of documents, appearance at interviews).

Backlog by Form (2003)							
Form No.	Form Name	FY '03 End Pending	Backlog	Backlog as % of End Pending	FY '03 Average Cycle Time (months)	March '04 Average Cycle Time (months)	FY '06 Target Cycle Time (months)
I-90	Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card	764,939	411,156	54%	13	11	6
I-129	Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker	75,058	14,999	20%	2	2	2
I-130	Immigration Petition for Alien Relative	1,874,911	1,514,473	81%	31	35	6
I-131	Application for Travel Document - Advance Parole	79,624	2,497	3%	3	4	3
I-131	Application for Travel Document - Reentry Permit	137,950	99,055	72%	10	11	3
I-140	Immigration Petition for Alien Worker	67,581	20,840	31%	8	11	6
I-485	Application to Adjust Status	1,234,812	760,210	62%	22	23	6
I-539	Application to Extend/Change Status	146,295	65,418	45%	5	4	3
I-751	Petition to Remove Conditions on Residence	176,768	91,876	52%	15	15	6
I-765	Application for Employment Authorization	430,660	-	0%	2	2	3
I-821	Application for Temporary Protected Status	120,116	99,042	82%	28	15	6
N-400	Application for Naturalization	627,270	358,590	57%	14	14	6
N-600/N-643	Application for Certificate of Citizenship	43,284	11,212	26%	9	7	6
I-589	Asylum Application	262,118	217,800	83%	35 <sup>1</sup>	35	6
I-881	NACARA 203 Application	47,923	32,852	69%	23	23	6
I-867	Credible Fear Referral	102	-	0%	15 days	15 days	15 days
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6,089,411</b>	<b>3,700,020</b>	<b>61%</b>			

Sources: USCIS Performance Analysis System (PAS), Refugee, Asylum and Parole System (RAPS), and Asylum Pre-Screening System (AAPS)

<sup>1</sup> This cycle time for asylum applications applies largely to cases in the backlog. New receipts have priority processing, and the majority of new asylum applications are processed within 60 days of receipt.

## Understanding the Backlog

# Productivity Improvements

Given current data on the backlog, productivity, and workload, USCIS must achieve a 19.6% increase in non-Asylum production to achieve cycle time goals and eliminate the backlog by the end of 2006. In addition, the Asylum Division must realize a 3.4% increase in production in order to achieve the same result. In order to achieve these productivity increases, USCIS will continue to:

- Reengineer processes and automate manual workflow processes wherever possible to achieve greater efficiencies;
- Update policies and procedures to streamline adjudications and increase the percentage of cases completed at initial review by an adjudicator;
- Manage production against milestones – beginning with collaboratively setting goals, reporting progress, and identifying additional improvement opportunities; and
- Work with the Office of the Ombudsman on pilot projects to test alternative processing approaches and new applications of proven off-the-shelf technology.

The following table illustrates the number of projected additional completions and the increase in production required to eliminate the backlog. The table below indicates the increase in productivity that USCIS needs to realize in order to fully eliminate the backlog.

As shown below, USCIS needs an overall increase in non-Asylum production capacity of approximately 19.6% to eliminate the backlog by the end of 2006 while the Asylum Division needs to increase its production by approximately 3.4%. USCIS believes the appropriate mechanism to achieve these productivity increases is through business process reengineering - not throwing additional staff at a broken process.

Additional Completions Needed to Eliminate the Backlog by 2006 <sup>1</sup>							
Form	Current Pending (FY '03)	Average Annual Receipts (FY '04 - '06)	Average Completions Needed Per Year	Additional Completions Needed Per Year Above Current Processing	Total Completions Needed a Month	Target Pending (FY '06)	Revised % Change in Monthly Completions
Non-Asylum	6,089,411	5,973,758	7,221,257	1,266,405	601,771	2,346,915	19.6%
Asylum	310,143	45,000	128,478	4,224	10,707	64,315	3.4%

<sup>1</sup> Includes non-Backlog Elimination Plan applications.

## Improvement Initiatives

Significant gains need to be realized in productivity in order to meet the cycle-time targets discussed earlier in this plan. USCIS believes that it has a history of process improvements and that its leadership and talented workforce can meet these challenges with substantive process improvements that improve customer service, shorten cycle times and improve national security while adhering to a high level of quality. USCIS recognizes that continuing to perform business as usual will not result in success, so it has launched several initiatives to change the way in which it conducts business.

Below are six categories of initiatives aimed at eliminating backlogs, improving customer service, and enhancing national security.

## Pilot Initiatives

Section 451 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 authorizes the Director of USCIS to design and implement pilot initiatives for backlog elimination.

In addition, as authorized in Section 452 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 USCIS is working with the Office of the Ombudsman to identify additional solutions, both Information Technology and workflow related, to improve customer service and reduce the backlog. The Ombudsman brings a new and unique perspective to improving processes and has been valuable in generating ideas for backlog elimination.

In February, USCIS began planning for several pilot projects that will reduce cycle time to the extent that interim benefits would not need to be issued. These pilots will be phased in during the third quarter of 2004 with the first scheduled to begin March 26, 2004. Successful pilots and subsequent national implementation will significantly reduce the amount of interim benefits USCIS would be required to issue, enabling a portion of the workforce to be redirected toward other backlog-elimination activity.

## Streamlining Process

Through process redesign efforts, USCIS can dramatically decrease the cycle time on certain high-volume forms while ensuring the same level of integrity in the adjudicative process. Below are several process-reengineering efforts that will streamline existing procedures.

- **Risk Assessment.** USCIS believes that through the use of risk assessment, quality assurance and fraud indicators, significant progress can be made in a short period of time to realign our workforce such that those cases that truly require adjudicative attention can be more fully scrutinized, and those that meet certain eligibility criteria can be handled in a more streamlined manner.
- **Form I-90.** USCIS is reengineering the adjudicative process for cases that do not actually provide a new benefit or status to the applicant. For example, the Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card (Form I-90) merely serves to replace evidence of a status already provided. USCIS sees this adjudicative process as a verification of identity and status. Since identity is verified at the time of filing, the largest segment of the cycle time currently experienced is the time spent waiting for an available officer to review the application and verify status in the system.

USCIS plans to use its electronic systems to cull out those pending cases where permanent resident status is not recorded and focus its adjudicative resources on those cases. USCIS believes that reducing the time spent on the low or no-risk cases

and focusing resources on the moderate to high-risk cases will strengthen adjudicative integrity. USCIS will implement this initiative with the support of the anti-fraud and quality components. If successful, this initiative would dramatically streamline the processing for nearly 1,000,000 applications annually.

- **Request for Evidence.** USCIS is currently in the process of analyzing and targeting for redesign the impediments to faster cycle times. For example, stakeholders have urged USCIS to review the frequency with which it requests additional evidence on certain case-types. USCIS has assembled an Action Team to determine where policies or regulations need to be clarified or modified to streamline adjudicative issues and ensure consistency. For example, applications that have historically experienced a 20-25% request for evidence rate have seen rates climb to 40% and sometimes over 50%. This not only increases cycle time, but it signifies that either applicants do not understand the eligibility requirements or there has been a shift in the way that adjudicators interpret those requirements.

Through a two-pronged campaign aimed at clarifying requirements for adjudicators and providing information to prospective applicants, USCIS believes that it can substantially reduce the frequency with which its officers need to request additional evidence. USCIS anticipates that this effort will streamline processing for another 100,000 cases.

## Improvement Initiatives

- **Form I-130.** USCIS has formed an Action Team to streamline the immigration process for eligible family members of United States citizens and permanent residents. The long-standing process first requires adjudication of a Petition for Alien Relative (Form I-130) to determine if a relationship exists that comports with the statute. Once that petition is approved, the applicant either files for adjustment of status to permanent resident in the United States or files for an immigrant visa abroad at a United States Embassy or Consulate, where the relationship issue is again adjudicated. USCIS is exploring ways in which to eliminate the duplicative effort that the current process mandates.
- **Pre-Certification.** USCIS is also developing a pre-certification program for employers of large numbers of temporary alien workers. Pre-certifying an employer would eliminate the need for USCIS to conduct background investigations on the employer's business viability and ability to pay the proffered wage every time that employer filed a petition for an immigrant or nonimmigrant worker. USCIS anticipates that several hundred large and mid-size companies will take advantage of this program in the first year alone.

- **Asylum.** In addition, USCIS has launched a pilot to expeditiously resolve a potentially significant number of cases in its pending Asylum caseload by determining whether certain applicants who are already eligible to apply for adjustment to lawful permanent resident (LPR) under special legislation still wish to pursue their Asylum applications. By identifying and efficiently closing applications filed by individuals who no longer wish to pursue their Asylum claims, USCIS can devote its resources to adjudicating new incoming applications or pending applications filed by individuals who are still interested in pursuing their Asylum claims.

These initiatives and others will provide USCIS the innovation it needs to ensure that cycle time goals are met. USCIS recognizes that any productivity enhancements must be carefully planned and monitored to ensure that process integrity and national security issues are not compromised in any way. Further, USCIS believes that these efforts to reduce cycle times and eliminate backlogs will actually further national security efforts.

## Quality Initiatives

USCIS believes that the elimination of the backlog must come largely through enhanced processes rather than additional resources. It is imperative that the integrity of the benefits process not be compromised in the effort to stimulate additional productivity. Efforts to benchmark and assure quality are at the heart of every production initiative.

The USCIS quality program includes several key components:

- National Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all major case-types and training for new and experienced officers have been promulgated as procedures are updated;
- The Naturalization Quality Procedures program (NQP), previously directed solely at ensuring integrity in the naturalization process, has been expanded to include all major form types, where processes are similar;
- USCIS continually works to update field manuals and has expanded access to an electronic library of immigration statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures;

- USCIS is piloting an end product review process at Service Centers to determine decision quality;
- USCIS continues its efforts to measure adherence to national standards in the Quality Assurance (QA) program in the naturalization process and has expanded this QA effort to include the adjustment of status process; and,
- USCIS has redesigned its internal communication procedures to ensure that all employees are provided with key information quickly and efficiently.

Additionally, USCIS has established a Headquarters component to oversee and coordinate quality assurance efforts and monitor the overall performance of operational components. By doing so, USCIS has consolidated quality initiatives and is poised to provide the direction necessary to aggressively expand quality assurance and improvement efforts nationwide.

## Improvement Initiatives

# Fraud Assessment and Deterrence Initiatives

USCIS understands that maintaining national security and deterring fraud are critical elements of its mission. To process these workloads, USCIS has established a Headquarters component responsible for working with the appropriate law enforcement entities in responding to national security hits on aliens who pose a threat to national security or public safety, and for identifying systemic fraud in the application process.

This component, in cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), will screen, identify, and refer cases involving suspected fraud and threats to public safety or national security to ICE for field investigation and enforcement action.

Anti-fraud efforts include developing standard operating procedures to aid field Adjudications staffs in identifying suspected fraud. These initiatives will better enable USCIS to identify applications that may involve fraud, deny benefits to aliens who commit fraud, and place those aliens in removal proceedings.

## Refugee Corps

Currently, the Office of Refugee Operations (ORO) has neither the workforce nor the management structure needed to meet the processing challenges facing us overseas, particularly in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the resulting security mandates. ORO relies on temporary duty personnel borrowed from other USCIS programs, in particular the Asylum Program, to meet virtually all its processing responsibilities. However, processing widespread at-risk populations with the limited flexibility and resources provided by other programs with equally critical missions makes it increasingly difficult to meet our U.S. Refugee Program (USRP) responsibilities and admission goals.

The establishment of a Refugee Corps in 2004 with an expanded management support structure will provide a strong and effective overseas refugee processing program that will more efficiently identify inadmissible persons and those who are of national security interest without compromising the USRP's humanitarian objectives. A Refugee Corps will ensure responsiveness to USRP commitments and goals, while eliminating, except in exceptional circumstances, the need to draw on scarce domestic program resources. It will also ensure the quality and consistency of refugee adjudications and improve the detection of refugee application fraud and the identification of security concerns relating to refugee admissions.

## Information Technology

Currently, USCIS uses multiple, disparate information systems with limited capabilities. The case processing systems are forms-driven, and reside on various hardware and software platforms that are not easily integrated. The use of multiple systems (both national and local) requires duplicate input of information, inhibits a consolidated view of a customer, and can deliver redundant and contradictory information. While the national and local systems may support one or more aspects of case processing in the USCIS, none support all of the operations associated with case processing.

Business process changes already identified to support long-term process efficiency will require a comprehensive upgrade in the USCIS computer systems, along with online training and education methods, and new IT investment strategies including public/ private partnerships.

USCIS has commenced the design phase of a new system, The Tracking Applications for Benefits System (TABS) that will remedy these shortfalls by delivering a repository of consolidated, end-to-end information for immigration applications. Centralized application information will allow USCIS to identify potential bottlenecks and more effectively plan resource allocation.

Additionally, the establishment of the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) will ensure that USCIS enterprise network infrastructure and strategies are aligned with that of the DHS Office of the CIO to ensure interoperability and compatibility of business applications while meeting USCIS mission and customer service objectives.

## Milestones and Reporting

# Backlog Elimination Milestones

The following table presents fiscal year backlog elimination milestones for each of the selected immigration benefit applications. USCIS will use these milestones to measure its performance.

Backlog Elimination Milestones							
Form No.	Form Name	FY '04 Completion Target	FY '05 Completion Target	FY '06 Completion Target	FY '04 Projected Cycle Time (months)	FY '05 Projected Cycle Time (months)	FY '06 Projected Cycle Time (months)
I-90	Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card	894,184	681,725	681,725	10	8	6
I-129	Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker	330,515	341,844	341,844	2	2	2
I-130	Immigration Petition for Alien Relative	883,517	1,503,957	1,272,579	30	16	6
I-131	Application for Travel Document - Advance Parole	315,936	305,835	305,835	3	3	3
I-131	Application for Travel Document - Reentry Permit	162,388	174,567	183,295	11	7	3
I-140	Immigration Petition for Alien Worker	98,160	105,227	105,268	8	7	6
I-485	Application to Adjust Status	752,173	936,164	1,154,635	20	15	6
I-539	Application to Extend/Change Status	209,003	290,594	290,998	5	4	3
I-751	Petition to Remove Conditions on Residence	147,308	175,556	197,361	15	11	6
I-765	Application for Employment Authorization	1,701,947	1,770,000	1,770,000	3	3	3
I-821	Application for Temporary Protected Status	127,323	12,000	12,000	6	6	6
N-400	Application for Naturalization	587,671	666,667	666,667	14	10	6
N-600/N-643	Application for Certificate of Citizenship	63,850	69,947	69,947	8	7	6
I-589	Asylum Application	94,000	97,000	110,815	23	14	6
I-881	NACARA 203 Application	25,000	25,000	18,620	16	9	6
I-867	Credible Fear Referral	5,000	5,000	5,000	15 days	15 days	15 days
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6,397,975</b>	<b>7,161,083</b>	<b>7,186,578</b>			

## Production Monitoring

USCIS will use its backlog elimination milestones to work with offices and service centers to establish production plans. USCIS will use these plans both to monitor office and service center progress toward the backlog elimination milestones and to plan for future activities. By tracking individual office production, USCIS can identify and resolve obstacles to increased production.

By regularly reviewing productivity factors and adjusting resource allocation and business processes, USCIS will ensure increased efficiency.

## Reports

USCIS will provide Congress with quarterly progress reports on its Backlog Elimination achievements. The reports will show Bureau-wide, District Office and Service Center progress against the Backlog Elimination milestones for each of the forms identified in the report tables. The initial report will provide production data and show progress covering the first nine months of FY 2004, and

will be provided to Congress during the fourth quarter of FY 2004. Reports will follow each quarter to provide updates to the Congress on progress made during the preceding three-month period.

# Conclusion

To meet cycle time commitments by the end for 2006, USCIS will rely on reengineering processes, increasing the use of Information Technology to achieve greater efficiencies, updating policies and procedures to increase completion rates, managing against milestones, and working cooperatively with stakeholders to identify other means of improvement. USCIS will meet the President's goals no later than the end of 2006. This will include a focus on eliminat-

ing the backlog, improving customer service, and ensuring national security. USCIS also will intensify its anti-fraud efforts, enhance its quality program, and modernize its Information Technology systems that will be the backbone of reengineered business processes. The combination of these efforts and the dedication of its leadership and staff will ensure that USCIS provides the right benefit to the right person in the right amount of time.